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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000449

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A A/S CARTER, AF/C
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND HUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: UNAMID UPDATE, MARCH 31

REF: A) KHARTOUM 425
B) KHARTOUM 347
C) KHARTOUM 310

¶1. (SBU) Summary: UNAMID is preparing for Nepalese contingent-owned equipment (COE) to arrive in Sudan. The COE will get here before the contingent of Nepalese troops, which UNAMID is pushing to be on the ground by July 2009. In April and May, an Egyptian battalion will deploy to two camps in the contentious region southwest of Nyala in Sector South. A financial dispute is hindering the arrival of the 2nd Ethiopian battalion, which intends to travel in April by road convoy from Addis Ababa to Sector South. Construction will commence shortly on facilities in Nyala for the Ethiopian MI-24 attack helicopters, but the GOS has not yet given final approval for their operation in Darfur. However, this should be a procedural approval as the GOS has not previously objected to this aspect of UNAMID's deployment plan. Finally, the backlog for receiving UNAMID visas continues to grow, as the GOS continues to delay visa issuance to important senior officers from European countries. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Under a somewhat unusual arrangement, Nepalese COE will be shipped directly to Port Sudan from the manufacturer due to political instability in Nepal, according to Col. Noddy Stafford, J5 of UNAMID. With the COE scheduled to arrive prior to the summer arrival of the Nepalese Force Reserve and Sector Reserve units, UNAMID intends to lump it in with shipments of other COE and UNAMID equipment from Port Sudan to Darfur. UNAMID does not expect this arrangement to complicate the arrival of what will amount to a significant portion of the total Nepalese COE. Both Nepalese units had planned to arrive as late as September 2009, but with equipment on the ground as soon as May, UNAMID HQ intends to push for their early deployment in July of this year.

¶3. (SBU) UNAMID will proceed in April and May to deploy two Egyptian battalions in South Darfur, which should help UNAMID better respond to violence there (Ref A). In mid-April, a convoy of Egyptian engineers and Nigerian infantry will proceed to Eid Al Fursan, approximately 100 kilometers west-southwest of Nyala, and will commence construction of a UNAMID team site there. Within two months, the engineering company will move further south to do the same near Tulus, approximately 100 km south-southwest of Nyala, while 425 Egyptian peacekeepers will deploy to the new team site at Eid Al Fursan.

¶4. (SBU) The second Ethiopian battalion has arranged to arrive in Darfur in April after traveling in a massive self-contained convoy by road from Addis Ababa, but disagreements at UNHQ over the amount of reimbursement may preclude the convoy from departing. According to Stafford, a self-contained convoy from a neighboring African country would relieve UNAMID of the massive administrative headaches caused by bringing COE first to Darfur and then deploying it to the field. The convoy would leave Addis Ababa to reach Nyala several days later, and the battalion would deploy immediately to turbulent

Gereida (site of the largest IDP camp in Darfur) and a second camp in Sector South. Such an operation would reap "huge benefits" in fulfilling UNAMID's mandate, and Stafford asked that international partners press UNHQ to resolve this matter as quickly as possible so the convoy can depart in April.

15. (SBU) UNAMID has succeeded in obtaining the necessary land and has pre-positioned Chinese engineers at the airstrip in Nyala in preparation for the construction of facilities to house the Ethiopian attack helicopters. To house the Ethiopian attack helicopter pilots near the UN terminal in Nyala, construction of housing and associated machine shops should commence shortly. However, the Government of Sudan (GOS) has yet to issue formal permission for the arrival and operations of the helicopters in Sudan, an issue that Stafford expects will be taken up at the upcoming tripartite meetings in El Fasher. (Note: The approval should be routine as the GOS has not previously objected to this aspect of UNAMID's deployment plan. UN/USG Susanna Malcorra is currently in Sudan to participate in the El Fasher tripartite meetings. End note.)

16. (SBU) UNAMID is bracing for an internal administrative crisis as the GOS has ceased issuing visas to senior experienced Western military officers. According to Stafford, 152 UNAMID visas are pending, while only 22 officers remain in UNAMID from Western countries including the UK, France, Denmark, Australia and New Zealand. French military authorities are now no longer sending officers to UNAMID due to the visa hold-up, and the UK is considering following France's lead. Stafford predicted that the hybrid mission's effectiveness will decline quickly if officers with significant experience from developed countries are not permitted to serve in UNAMID. Regime officials have repeatedly made it quite

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clear to Emboffs that the regime will not approve such visas given the current political situation.

17. (SBU) Comment: Post requests that USUN consider pressing the issue of Ethiopian reimbursement at UNHQ to ensure that the convoy of the 2nd Ethiopian Battalion can depart Addis this month and relieve pressure on UNAMID HQ in El Fasher. While the UNAMID visa backlog once reportedly stood at 900 last year, even 152 outstanding visas is cause for concern at such a critical time. With Sudanese authorities limiting the space for civil society and humanitarian operations in Darfur, foot-dragging on UNAMID visas for experienced officers will result in an even less effective peacekeeping mission, and a more unstable Darfur. All the developments on deployments over the last year may be limited in effectiveness if the GOS limits UNAMID's military management to officers from third world countries the regime likes.

FERNANDEZ